



# <sup>40</sup>Center to study illnesses linked to Libby mine

DETROIT (AP) — Karmanos Cancer Center is launching a comprehensive medical program to study the effects of asbestos-related cancers linked to contaminated vermiculite from a Montana mine.

More than 200 deaths and hundreds of long-term asbestos-related illnesses have been linked to the mine at Libby, Mont. Doctors at Karmanos said they were prompted to form the Center

for Vermiculite and Asbestos-Related Diseases after learning that a Dearborn factory had processed more than 3 million pounds of the mine's mineral for insulation and fireproofing.

The insulation was used in as many as 700,000 Michigan homes.

The Dearborn Zonolite/W.R. Grace plant closed in

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DAILY INTERLAKE

Kalispell MT 59904

Daily

APR 6 2004

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1990, but federal authorities are investigating contamination connected to it, including who may have been exposed, at what levels, and for how long.

It can take up to 40 years of exposure for symptoms of mesothelioma, an asbestos cancer, to appear. Grace operated the mine from 1963 to 1990.

"How many people who were exposed to this insula-

tion actually have any problems related to it?" asked Dr. John Ruckdeschel, Karmanos' director. "What about people who installed it? Or just walked by it? There is no data, no research. So now if somebody asks their internist, they have a number to call."

Dr. Michael Harbut, with the Center for Occupational and Environmental Medicine in Royal Oak, told the Detroit Free Press that he expects the new program to gain momentum gradually, as doctors

across the country begin referring patients for screening, treatment and study.

"It's tremendously exciting, and no one else is doing it," he said. "It really fills a void."

Karmanos has one of the three mesothelioma treatment and research centers in the country. The others are at cancer centers at Sloan-Kettering in New York and Dana Farber in Boston.

The Detroit hospital was expected to announce the new center Monday.